

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY ASKS: WHY ARE GUARDS AT NUCLEAR REACTORS USING UNLOADED WEAPONS?

Washington, DC: Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee today released a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) asking whether reports that Pennsylvania's nuclear reactors are being guarded by National Guard troops using unloaded weapons are true, and whether this is also true of National Guard troops in other States.

"It is ludicrous to allow the National Guard to guard nuclear reactors, which we know Al Qaeda would like to attack, using unloaded weapons," said Rep. Markey. "How can these troops protect themselves, the reactors and the surrounding communities if their guns aren't even loaded?"

According to a story that appeared on May 31, 2002 in the Associated Press, Pennsylvania House Minority Whip Mike Veon's commented in the York Daily Record that National Guard troops carry ammunition on their belts, but that their weapons are unloaded. It is unclear what security value this adds to the plants, since a terrorist attack would likely happen quickly and with no advance warning that would enable these troops to load their weapons. This places the National Guard troops, the nuclear reactors and consequently the surrounding communities at risk.

Rep. Markey's letter asked the NRC for the following information:

- Whether the report that National Guard troops stationed at Pennsylvania's nuclear reactors are carrying unloaded weapons is true.
- A list of each State that currently uses National Guard or State troops to guard nuclear reactors, and whether those troops are using loaded or unloaded weapons.
- Whether the NRC believes that any guard forces assigned to secure nuclear reactors should be carrying loaded, modern weaponry in order to maximize their chances of thwarting a terrorist attack.
- Whether the NRC believes that in cases where troops are guarding nuclear reactors with unloaded weapons, that their presence gives the surrounding communities a false sense of security.

For all correspondence on this issue, please refer to our website, www.house.gov/markey.